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Diana T Fritz 06/05/2007 10:34:45 AM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

February 09, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 726 - UNKNOWN)
TAGS: PREL, ECON, EAID, ETRD, KPAL, KPAO, KDEM
Captions: None
Subject: UAE OPINION MAKERS TO NEA/RA GRAPPO: MEPI WILL FOUNDER
ABSENT MEPP PROGRESS
Ref: None

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 00726

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: PAO RSO AMB DCM P/M ECON
Laser1:
INFO: PAO

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:TEWILLIAMS
DRAFTED: ECON:CMCRUMPLER
CLEARED: POL:STWILLIAMS PAO:KVV CDG:ROLSON

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RUEKJCS RUEKJCS RUCJACC RUCQSOC RUEOBBA
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8361
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 2790
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/UNMA//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP/J3//
RUCJACC/USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ3/CCJ4/CCJ5//
RUCQSOC/USCINCSOC MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 000726

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IPA, NEA/ARP, NEA/PD AND NEA/RA
NSC FOR ABRAMS AND CLARKE
CENTCOM FOR POLAD AMBASSADOR LITT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/09/2013
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: UAE OPINION MAKERS TO NEA/RA GRAPPO: MEPI WILL FOUNDER ABSENT
MEPP PROGRESS

1. (U) Classified by Charge D'Affaires Thomas Williams for reasons 1.5
(b) and (d).

12. (C) Summary and comment: NEA/RA Office Director Grappo visited the UAE on February 4 to discuss MEPI issues. He elicited a few program ideas, but also a wide range of reactions with local contacts -- from the polite indifference of local businesswomen to the obvious enthusias of the Ministry of Education Undersecretary. By and large, our contacts opined that the timing of the introduction of MEPI is poor, given the USG's current focus on Iraq. They also judge our credibility to be at low ebb because of perceived inaction on the Middle East Peace Process. End summary and comment.

13. (C) Members of the Executive Council of the National Businesswomen's Committee in Abu Dhabi met with visiting NEA/RA Director Gary Grappo early on the morning of February 4, and initially rebuffed MEPI initiatives -- noting that the UAE does not share the economic or political problems of Saudi Arabia and others in the region, and that Emirati women are afforded equal rights under UAE law. They admitted, however that specific training for businesswomen (writing a business plan, managing business accounts, etc.) would be helpful. The plan to discuss challenges to local businesswomen at a National Businesswomen's Committee-sponsored conference in April. Grappo agreed to forward a list of the top businesswomen in America, from which the Council could extend invitations to the conference and explore the possibility of a U.S.-UAE businesswomen-mentoring program, perhaps within the framework of MEPI.

14. (SBU) Grappo subsequently met with Dr. Jamal Muheiri, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Education and Youth, to discuss possibilities for education reform and development in the MEPI framework. Dr. Muheiri, an enthusiastic participant in the November U.S.-UAE Strategic Dialogue in Washington, emphasized the importance of education as a way of combating extremism. "It is our problem too," he said; "this is the problem of our society in this century. We want to provide curricula to the young which will combat religious extremism." Dr. Muheiri requested MEPI assistance in four areas in which the UAE has already embarked on reform: curriculum development, teacher training, information technology, and library systems.

15. (C) At a lunch in honor of Grappo, a small group of UAE academics and opinion makers made clear that the moribund peace process remains among the most important issues and that in the Emirati view, the lack of forward movement on the roadmap will significantly hamper the USG's ability to spread the MEPI message. This view was most eloquently conveyed by longtime Embassy contact and Emirates News Agency Director Ibrahim Al-Abed -- a Palestinian by birth who is also a key advisor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Minister Hamdan Bin Zayid Al-Nahyan and Information Minister Abdullah Bin Zayid Al-Nahyan.

16. (C) Capturing the sense of frustration and disappointment of many of our contacts, Al-Abed argued that Arabs simply would not accept the U.S. message on the need for reform and democratization as credible while the Israeli government is bulldozing Palestinian homes and killing civilians in the Territories. He scoffed at our decision to delay the roadmap until after the Israeli government is formed, noting that Sharo is wasting no time in creating additional facts on the ground, and derided what he characterized as our "tacit acceptance" of Israel's decision to block the travel of Palestinian officials to London last month. Al-Abed noted that USG credibility was on the line when we called for political reform in the Arab world while at the same time seeking a "regime change" in the democratically elected Palestinian Authority, all while also cooperating closely with some of the most undemocratic regimes in the region. "We have the right to question," he commented acidly, "whether you will ultimately choose your interests over your principles." Academic participants at the lunch did not disagree with Al-Abed, but rather suggested that since USG credibility is at low ebb, we should work MEPI almost entirely through NGOs.

17. (C) Following a brief interview at the Dubai Business Channel, Grappo met a number of Dubai businessmen, emirate-level government officials, and academics -- who by and large were receptive to MEPI principles -- at a dinner hosted by CG Dubai. All agreed that MEPI programs probably are not applicable to Dubai, which is more likely a model for economic reform and digital readiness for the rest of the Middle East, and might be an appropriate location for some of the regional training Grappo proposed. The Dubai crowd was less vocal about its opposition to U.S. policies in the region; the Director of Dubai's Technology, E-commerce, and Media Free Zone (TECOM .e. Dubai Interne

and Media Cities), Ahmed Bin Byat, said to Grappo, "we leave politics t
Abu Dhabi; politics get in the way of business." (Comment: In Dubai,
passionate feelings about the issues of Iraq and the Palestinians run
just as high as they do in Abu Dhabi, but are less likely to spill over
into business dealings. End comment.)

18. (U) This cable has been coordinated with Dubai.

Williams